

Capturing Kids' Hearts™ Parent Information

We are excited to share information with you about a priority initiative at our school called **Capturing Kids' Hearts!** If you've been a part of our school community for more than a few months, you have most likely heard us talk about CKH already, but we wanted to send out more detailed information. If, after reading this, you desire more information, please do not hesitate to contact our principal, Mrs. Theresa Ritz, at tritz@d49.org.

A few years ago, POWER Zone staff members were trained in this program, and it immediately helped us and has continued to help us positively transform our school culture and climate. Teachers walked away from the training truly inspired and changed. Each year we train our new teachers in Capturing Kids' Hearts, and this year (Aug. 31 & Sept. 1) our entire licensed staff will participate in the next level of training, Capturing Kids' Hearts 2. Our students are achieving at all-time high levels, and we know that Capturing Kids' Hearts is an important factor in our accomplishments. In fact, our staff's effective use of CKH has been noticed, and we are being nominated as a Capturing Kids' Hearts National Showcase School during the 2017-18 school year!

This amazing program outlines a process staff can use to help build meaningful connections between staff and students, students and their peers, and between staff and families. The goal is to capture kids' hearts in order to capture their minds. Research shows that when students feel more connected to their school and staff, they achieve higher academic success and are less likely to have attendance, tardy, or behavioral issues. Students thrive when they feel cared for and engaged. At Ridgeview, we start the year off in classrooms with **ME Bags** as our way of quickly engaging students in the classroom culture; the sharing of the bags (a few special items per student) is generally quite engaging and makes each student feel special.

One central piece of CKH is the **Social Contract**. A Social Contract is built in each classroom to establish the guidelines and expectations for how students and teachers will treat each other. Students work together to develop this contract, and the teacher acts as a facilitator to encourage discussion. The Social Contract is designed to help students internalize and practice character traits and skills that they will use in their future lives (to include in their future employment). It also lets all participants in a classroom know what

behavior is acceptable and what is not. The goal is to help each student develop “self-managing” skills. We don’t just believe in the Social Contract for our students, each year the RVES staff also creates a Staff Social Contract that governs how we treat one another, and we hold each other accountable for this throughout the school year.

The **Four Questions** help students focus on positive behavior, demonstrate they know what behavior is expected, take responsibility when they are not doing what is expected, and determine what they should be doing instead. School-wide, common signals such as **Time-Out and Check** are useful in maintaining our positive learning environment. Students are taught that the Time-Out signal means to stop, match the signal, and listen. In addition, students are taught that they can be a good friend by helping peers stay on a positive path. If students see rules being violated, they can discreetly “check” their friend as a visual cue to get back on track so that the teacher does not have to get involved. We teach students to check their friend once as a friendly reminder, and then to allow their friend to make his/her choices.

The following are some additional components of Capturing Kids’ Hearts that your students experience at Ridgeview. The EXCEL Model™ helps to show students that RVES teachers and staff care about them.

- **Engage:** Administration greets every student with a high five and a smile as they walk through the front doors in the mornings. Teachers personally greet each individual student at the classroom door with a handshake and a smile. Teachers model appropriate handshakes as this is an important life & job skill.
- **X-plore:** Teachers and staff look for opportunities to listen to and interact with students, not just about school happenings but also about students’ lives outside of school. Students enjoy sharing “Good Things” each morning with their peers and teacher. Teachers affirm students’ personal experiences and show a genuine interest in their thoughts and feelings.
- **Communicate:** Interactions in classrooms are more of a dialogue between the teacher and students, as well as between students themselves, with the teacher serving as a resource and a facilitator of learning. Classroom lessons are tied directly to the real world in order

to show students the importance of their education. Teachers facilitate classroom meetings and conversations focused on the classroom Social Contract, embedding those ideals into the daily schedule and lessons.

- **Empower:** Teachers and staff empower students to interact more directly with peers, to self-manage and peer-manage with behaviors in school when appropriate, and to problem-solve on their own when appropriate.
- **Launch:** A conscious effort is made to close each school day with a positive thought, an inspirational quote/video/activity, or with affirmations. The idea is to inspire students to enjoy their evening at home and to look forward to the next school day.

Capturing Kids' Hearts is a process that involves many components. We have only shared pieces of CKH in this document, but we hope it helps to provide a general understanding of its usefulness and some information about the basic strategies. At Ridgeview, we often ask ourselves and each other, "Are we capturing their hearts today?" This helps to keep us focused on what matters the most-- our students. When relationships are positive and meaningful, the sky is the limit for learning!